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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **SACRAMENTO MAN CONVICTED OF MAIL FRAUD SCHEME TO STEAL HURRICANE KATRINA DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

SACRAMENTO—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that JOHN M. FORD, 35, pleaded guilty today before U.S. District Judge Lawrence K. Karlton to using the U.S. Mail to obtain Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance by fraud.

In September 2005, the Attorney General for the United States Department of Justice created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force designed to deter, investigate, and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud, and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force—chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division—includes the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, and others. This case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Michelle Rodriguez, who is prosecuting this case, on September 24, 2005, FORD applied with FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) for disaster relief, to include cash (debit cards) and housing assistance. As a result, FEMA mailed FORD an approval notice and a U.S. Treasury check for \$2,000. Through the American Red Cross, FORD also falsely obtained FEMA money and lodging as a disaster victim. FORD's lodging claim was approved and for over one month FEMA paid for FORD to stay at a Marysville, California motel at a cost of over

\$2,370. FEMA later determined that FORD's so-called destroyed primary residence in New Orleans was in fact a government office building. While in Marysville, FORD sought even more disaster assistance money by falsely adding to his claim that he was displaced with three dependent children. FORD admitted in federal court this morning that in 2005 and for the 10 years preceding 2005, he was a permanent resident of California. FORD also admitted that as a California resident in Sacramento in 2005 he was receiving California welfare assistance and food stamps.

FORD was arrested on March 10, 2008. After his entry of a guilty plea this morning, Judge Karlton remanded FORD pending the sentencing hearing. FORD is facing up to 20 years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and three years of federal supervised release. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables and any applicable statutory sentencing factors. Sentencing is scheduled for June 10, 2008.

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